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JEWELS GATHERED

1459







JEWELS GATHERED;

OR,

SCENES FROM LIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“SHE WILL NEVER DIE.”

“They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when
I make up my jewels.”

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JEWELS GATHERED;

OR,

SCENES FROM LIFE.

IN a large mercantile town in one of the mid-land counties there was a street, with its courts and alleys, where sin, vice, and crime with all their horrors reigned so fearfully, that it was a terror and byword not only to the neighbourhood, but to the town itself. The thief and gambler, the pickpocket, the drunkard, and swearer, were there; disease in its most loathsome form, and drunkenness in all its madness; the poor fallen one, too, whom sin or fair promises with gilded deceit had ruined, and who cared not what her future life might be, for, lost to all self-respect, she sought not the respect of others. No wonder the locality was shunned by old and young.

rich and poor, save those whose degradation it suited, or whose poverty compelled them to seek a home in its haunts. I had a peculiar love in childhood, even as now, for exploring nooks and corners to see how the poor lived, and could never pass the street without a longing desire to know all it contained ; yet felt, if I passed too near, as if its pollution would reach me ; and it was also a strict parental injunction that I should never, upon any occasion, pass through it. Years passed on, but its character remained unchanged ; often it elicited the anxious inquiry, from benevolent and philanthropic minds—What can be done for it ?

A little girl from one of its haunts entered our Sunday school at this time, and from her we gathered much that was interesting respecting it, and much that was deeply painful to the feelings. We inquired of her if any one visited the district. “ Oh no, ma’am,” she replied ; “ they would only beat and pelt them.”

The simple narration of the child revived all the ardent desire to do them good, and the sub-

ject became one of deep and prayerful interest to many Christian hearts, earnest and active in their Master's cause, as to what steps should be taken to get the messages of mercy and offers of salvation to them. It was proposed and accepted by two, whose hearts and lives were devoted to the service of God, to try and visit them, and rescue some from the shackles of sin and death, hoping, yet scarcely expecting, to meet with a favourable reception. They made their first visit on the following Sabbath afternoon, and being a hot summer day, found both men and women lounging at their doors, or some lying full length upon the causeway, others sitting upon the kerbstone with their pipes and jugs of beer, in which their senses were already steeped. Nothing but oaths and curses met them, with many a fearful threat ; they passed on in silence, as their books in hand told their mission ; they ventured at one or two of the open doors to offer a tract, but were instantly repulsed by the slamming to of the doors, and *only succeeded in leaving a few, and those amid*

laughs and sneers ; many of the courts and alleys they passed sent forth such sounds, they felt it would for the present be dangerous ground to enter. They returned, not discouraged, but feeling it must be the same Almighty voice that once said, "*Let there be light,*" that could reach this moral chaos, and bid the fearful darkness that enveloped the polluted mass to flee. They renewed their visit at the same hour on the next Sabbath, but the angry and furious words that greeted them convinced them that they were not so safe as they had hoped. They were passing a group of savage-looking men, who bid them "walk," at the same time knocking their hats off and their books into the gutter ; they picked them up quietly, intending to go on, when the men, enraged at their coolness, suited the action to the word by picking up mud and stones to pelt them with, at which they were compelled to make a hasty retreat, the mob giving them chase to the end of the street, shouting—

"Had ye bin leddies, we'd a treated ye civilly."

All their sanguine hopes were crushed by this specimen of decided opposition. Still the question was thoughtfully and prayerfully pondered ; it lay heavily upon the heart of many ; for were they not men, created in the image of God, but defaced by sin ? but could not grace create them anew in Christ Jesus, transforming the lion to the lamb ? The question arose, whether they would show the promised civility to ladies if they went ? It seemed doubtful ; for they were not the honest sons of toil, the thriving artisan, or industrious mechanic, but the very dregs and refuse of society. Nevertheless, the inquiry went forth—Who will go and speak to them of Jesus ? A young lady—once a gay votary of the world, following its deceitful pleasures, and mixing in its gay and glittering scenes, with all the zest and eagerness of her impulsive nature—was arrested by the Spirit of God ; grace renewed her heart, and sanctified her mind, and now all her powers and affections were *enlisted in the cause of her Redeemer—who, from the moment of her conversion, evinced an ardent*

longing, and sought, by earnest prayer and effort, to win souls for Christ—offered without hesitation to go if I would join her. The deep interest I had from childhood felt in the locality, and the probability of gaining entrance not only to their hovels but to their hearts, and winning some poor lost one back to God, overcame my timidity and plea of unfitness for the work. I could fain have said, “O Lord God! behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child ;” but the answer of the Lord is, “Now, therefore, go : I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say ;” and when the Lord teaches, it clothes the tongue with words of truth and power that become “words in season” to the weary and distressed.

Many were the prayers and anxieties for our protection and safety that attended us when, between the hours of Divine service, we set out upon our new labour of love. As we turned the corner of the street leading to it, we encountered the keen, searching eye of the policeman, as he was *pacing to and fro* upon his beat, as if inquiring *upon what errand* we were bent. Our books

must have told him our purpose, and the purity of our intentions gave us courage; for we carried liberty for the captive, food for the hungry, clothing for the naked, happiness for the wretched, salvation for the lost, hope for the dying—all in Christ! We had not proceeded far when we met our little friend; taking her by the hand, we led her back a little way with us; there was a buzz and laugh amongst the idlers as we advanced with our innocent guide: they wondered, perhaps, that we dared to venture so unprotected; but they knew not that the Lord was our shield, and in Him was our trust. After quietly directing us to one or two places where, in her childish simplicity, she thought we might with safety go, she skipped away towards school like a pure little spirit from that mass of corruption. We picked our way cautiously through the filth with which it abounded, and which baffles all description—where gutters and cart-ruts seemed to vie with each other which should hold the most mud; squalid-looking children *with scarcely any covering; pigs, fowls, and*

donkeys, all revelling in the dirt together ; women crouching down at their doors, looking most unwomanly, as if soap and water, brush and comb, needle and thread, were things unheard of ; we should have liked to stay and speak kindly to them, but felt our first visit must be one of little more than a reconnoitre, and a test of our welcome. Knocking at a door that was tolerably inviting, we inquired if they would allow us to leave a tract, and we would call to exchange it another day.

“Then ye may keep it,” was the indignant reply, thrusting it back at us, and slamming to the door. At a house further on we offered them a leaflet, saying we did not want it again, which met with a gruff “Thank ye.” We made the same effort at every accessible door, and found that the leaflet, as a gift, was received better than the tract as a loan. We thought it advisable not to visit any of the courts and alleys, but to make our acquaintance first with those in the *main street* ; for if that presented such a scene of *wretchedness*, what must those dark and suspi-

cious alleys disclose ? We had reached the limit of our district, and had now to return. It was not without some nervous fears as to our safety that we found the street had literally filled ; such faces of misery, sickness, and degradation had never met our gaze before, save one here and there in the public thoroughfares. We retraced our steps silently ; only where we saw a countenance looking, as we imagined, more amiable than the rest, we ventured a "good afternoon," which met as a response with a low chuckling laugh. We certainly breathed more freely as we emerged from these abodes of darkness, but in such a condition of shoes almost unknown to us before. Still we were encouraged, not by the welcome given, but in not receiving any insult or opposition. I am not satisfied that, as a rule, the step was a prudent one for two so young, but it was so manifestly a work of mercy given us to do, that we took it up in the Lord's strength, trusting the result would be for His glory. It was one of those dark spots in our beautiful earth so polluted by sin, so steeped in

iniquity, so sunk in degradation, that the mind instinctively recoils from it : upon no other errand than that of love, and with no message than that of peace, dare we have visited them.

It gave us full employ through the week to collect the most attractive and interesting leaflets we could find, intending to adopt the plan of giving them instead of lending tracts. With rather less of nervous fear, and more of confidence, we set out upon our second visit to these dens, resolving, if possible, to gain access to them by showing an interest in their welfare, and a desire to improve their temporal and spiritual condition. At the top of one of the alleys a number of men were congregated, playing at some game, and others standing idly by, smoking and looking on. We offered one of them a leaf with an interesting narrative upon it ; asking him to accept it, he took it, and handing it to one of his companions, said, "Here, Jack, it'll do to light yer pipe with." But I do not think Jack lighted his pipe with it, for as we returned we fancied a sly little corner was peep-

ing out of the man's hand, which gratified us exceedingly, and we could only hope and pray it might be as "bread cast upon the waters," to be found after many days. We passed on from house to house, with some feeling we were really sanctioned, and occasionally offering a tract as well as a sort of intimation we should come again. We stood at the entrance of a court looking cleaner and more inviting than the others, hesitating whether we might venture down, when a poor humble dwelling, with its clean step and tidy little curtains, told of a different inhabitant to the rest. We knocked at the door, when a weak voice answered, "Come in ;" we lifted the latch and entered, when we found a poor decrepit old woman in bed, so neat and clean, but quite alone. We told her our errand, how God had laid it upon our hearts to come with the Bible to that neglected spot, so deeply needing the light of truth, when, lifting her poor thin arms, she exclaimed, "Bless God for sending you to this dark place ; but don't they insult you ?" We assured her our reception had been better

than we expected, that none had insulted us, only spoken roughly.

“ Well now, what cannot God do ? ” she replied. “ Is anything too hard for me ? saith the Lord.”

She invited us to sit down, when we gathered from her that she had been the wife of a corporal in some regiment, but death suddenly removed him, leaving her without any support ; she provided for herself and poor idiot boy tolerably well for some years, until hard fare and heavy work, with frequent exposure to damp and cold, brought on successive attacks of rheumatism, and now all her limbs were contracted, and she was nearly helpless. She had been two years dependent on the parish, and any little work her boy could do at a neighbouring mill. We inquired if that always provided her with needful food.

“ Oh yes, God is very good ; I have always my crust of bread and glass of water : I have not trusted Him with all my interests, and cast my cares upon Him, and told Him all my sorrows these many years in vain ; for He has promised *never to leave those desolate who look to Him.*”

We were not prepared to meet with such an oasis in this desert—a bright spot where the Sun of Righteousness shone so splendidly, and where the Holy Spirit had wrought such childlike dependence and love. But the Lord had some precious jewels here, of whom He will say in that day when He numbers them, "*They are mine.*" We inquired who kept her so neat and clean, and prepared her meals for her.

"I have a kind neighbour," she said, "who comes in as often as she can spare a minute, and does a few things for me; then when my poor hands will let me I do a bit of work for her children. My boy gets me some breakfast before he goes in a morning, and if no one looks in through the day, why, I have to wait until he comes home at night; for if they are busy at the mill, they would rather give him a bit of dinner than lose his time. But my good neighbour never neglects me if she can possibly help, and sometimes brings me a bit of her own hot dinner if she can spare it."

Oh, how much of real kindness and sympathy

is there amongst the poor, in giving help in time of trouble, and doing so many acts of kindness often unsolicited ! They may be done roughly, but are nevertheless warmly and heartily given. We inquired if she was not afraid of being in such a neighbourhood and so unprotected, as any one could lift the latch and go in. With a smile of happy confidence she replied—

“No, I am not unprotected ! for the Lord is my defence, and He will not suffer any one to harm me ; they have never offered me any unkindness, and they know there is not anything here worth their trouble ; yet, I must confess, I feel rather nervous when I hear men so drunken, ay, and women too, come tumbling and roaring down the court, particularly if my Harry is not come in, as they love to get him when they can, and try to make him drink too much ; and one night last week, because he would not have it, they threw a bucket of water over him, so that the poor lad came home soaking wet.”

We questioned her as closely and delicately as we could as to the supply of food she had had

that day, and many previous ones, and wrung from her the reluctant confession that it had been very scanty ; we found also that the pain she suffered so patiently, so uncomplainingly, was often very great. We told her we had a kind medical friend who would do all in his power to alleviate her sufferings, if it was agreeable and would be acceptable to her. Her eye brightened, but was soon dimmed with tears, as she assured us how welcome and timely the offer was ; and extending a hand to each, said, " God sent you—God sent you ! He always does provide for me, and at the very moment of my need."

Her simple faith had written over every want "*Jehovah-jireh*;" and the Lord did not disappoint her, but honoured the faith that trusted Him, and believed His word. We took our leave of this dear aged saint, promising to see her again the next day ; and as we closed the door felt we could with truth write over it, "*Jehovah-shammah*." We hastened to our kind friend, a Christian physician, who had assured us we might at any time command his services, and draw not

only upon his time and talent, but upon his purse. He had devoted his manly heart with its deep affections, and his mind with its noble powers, to the service of his God and Saviour, esteeming it one of the pleasures and privileges of his profession to soothe and mitigate the sufferings of others ; and it was a service owned and rewarded by Him who gave the talent. Wherever he went his visit was like the breath of spring, warm and genial, and few could speak of his gentle winning kindness without tears. He was often observed with pockets presenting rather a bulky appearance ; and could we have taken a peep into their depths, should have found some wine, with oranges and grapes, or whatever he thought would be acceptable to the sick ones ; and often was he seen alighting from his carriage, basket in hand, containing some of the more substantial elements of food, where he imagined there was a lack, and from which health might be suffering. We described to him, as well as *our medical knowledge* would permit, the *peculiarities* of her case, as he was anxious to take

with him some immediate remedies ; telling him of the wretched locality and the whereabouts of her dwelling, at the same time expressing many fears as to his safety, at which he smiled, and said he was not afraid when in the path of duty ; and assured us he should go, trusting in the same protection that was given to us.

We visited her again the following afternoon, taking with us such things of comfort and nourishment as we felt she needed. We found the street quite deserted : all seemed gone upon their errands of sin, excepting one here and there, whose battered face and haggard looks spoke of rough usage and scanty fare ; some few women were as usual lounging at the doors, and well might they prefer sitting out in the air to their close dwellings—if air it could be called, in such a foul atmosphere. But we heeded them not, making our way with alacrity over the heaps of dirt, gutters, and mud, to the abode so attractive to us. She was sitting up in bed with a bright happy face, as if waiting our arrival, for she *longed to unburden her full heart ; and as we*

listened to her glowing account of all the kindness and gentleness of her new friend, and of the bountiful supply he had left her, we drew the picture in our own minds of the young Christian physician, bending with a look of such compassionate love, over this dear afflicted one, soothing her anxieties and fears, and pouring oil and wine into the desolate heart, which in its distress and anxiety plays no unimportant part in the production and perpetuation of disease. He had begged her not to hesitate in telling him of any want—that he should see her again soon ; but in the meantime she was to send any little request through us. Oh, the luxury of being rich ! to be able to dry tears, to cheer desolate homes, and make sad hearts glad ; to replenish the widow's cruse of oil, and make the orphan's heart to sing with joy ! They are entered in Heaven's register as "loans to the Lord," and will be acknowledged in the great day of account as done to Christ,—"*Ye did it unto me.*" Oh that the *great responsibility* of wealth as a sacred trust *were more deeply felt, and more abundantly con-*

secrated to the Lord, to be used for Him in any way He shall direct ; truly "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and the "mite" as well as the more splendid offering are alike acceptable to Him, who "loveth a cheerful giver." How many, had they the willing heart, might supply the means of help and comfort, while others could find time to be their almoners to the sick, the destitute, and the needy. God favoured our work of benevolent love, for there were many to whose bountiful table and ample purse we had free access, so that we need not go empty-handed to any deserving case. We insisted upon getting her a cup of tea before leaving, and immediately set to work to replenish the fire ; when following her directions we found kettle and tea-things, all so handy and clean. It was a high day and a bright one in her existence, and such a cup of tea she protested she had not had for many a long day ; and while she lay enjoying it with some of the little delicacies we had brought, we cheered her by reading of those precious promises and assurances so dear to her heart, for there

was an intelligent and beautiful appreciation of the truths of the Bible which struck us most forcibly. The thought of a risen and ascended Saviour filled her with exceeding joy ; for as He had risen, she would rise too, clothed in His likeness, to be with Him and behold His glory ! She begged if we could stay we would read to her that inimitable chapter, the fourteenth of John ; but the very essence of truth and comfort to her mind was in the 19th verse—“ *Because I live, ye shall live also.*” Eternal life through Christ, as His gift and purchase, was a precious truth which her faith and hope grasped most firmly. We took our leave after commending her to the widow’s God, with many assurances that to anticipate our frequent visits did much to cheer and comfort her.

We thanked God for having so directed us, for had there been no other work for us than to minister to this dear lonely one, it would have repaid us, for all our own minds might suffer *from witnessing scenes of which we had often heard, but had never been in immediate contact*

with. We began to feel an increasing interest in the work before us, and hoped the day was not far distant when we might venture into some of the more repulsive-looking places ; still we were willing to go on cautiously, tempering our zeal with wisdom, and not exposing ourselves unnecessarily to any rudeness. We had turned into some of the courts where there appeared only cellars or stores, and were upon the point of entering one we knew contained dwellings of some description, when a rough, half sotted-looking man, lounging near, called after us,—

“They’ve got the fever there, ye’d better not go.”

We thanked him and turned back, wondering in our minds whether “the fever” was physical or moral ; but we thought it better to follow his advice ; for had we persisted in going, he might possibly have offered a resistance not very palatable, and yet we fancied there was a look of interest as he watched us in and out of the different places ; but what the nature of that interest might be we could not tell. We were

encouraged in finding that every visit we disposed of more leaflets, and they were received in a kinder manner ; but we had not dared to enter any of their dwellings, or offered to read to them, until, finding a door open and an old man sitting near, we asked if we might sit down with him a few minutes ; he bid us do so, but added,—

“ I don’t think ye’re over wise in coming here, for if some of them rough uns catch ye, ye’ll remember it.”

We explained to him our motive for coming, and the protection we confided in, and begged if we could be of any comfort to him only to tell us ; asking in the same breath if he would let us read to him, fearing he might say something by way of putting a stop to us ; but the influence of kind words seemed irresistible, and he said,—

“ Yes, ye may if ye like ; only be quick, afore my woman comes back.”

We read to him of the soul with “scarlet” sins, and “crimson” guilt, being made “*whiter than snow*” in the Saviour’s blood ; of the assurances of mercy in the Gospel to which no poor

sinner ever appealed in vain, or without success ; of the free gift of salvation, and the greatness and preciousness of the pardon offered through Christ, entreating him to come with his burden of sin and guilt to the cross—the cross of Jesus, and to make sure now of his eternal safety ; that present things were of little worth compared with the momentous future, giving him as a text easy to remember, and one of life-giving power when laid upon the heart by the Holy Spirit,—“ *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.*” His heart was softened and subdued for the moment by the influence of these precious truths, and putting out his hand to us, said,—

“Will ye come again, when my woman’s out ?”

We heard afterwards that “my woman” was most truly a virago, the very terror of her husband and others too, for scarcely any could compete with her, even among her Irish neighbours, with which the place generally abounded ; but, like migratory birds, they had their seasons of

coming and going, and no very inviting aspect did it wear during their stay.

We had for some weeks missed our little friend from school, and felt we must inquire and search her out, for we never could prevail upon the little creature to tell us exactly where she lived. We saw the man who had warned us of "the fever" standing at his post, and felt it would be a good opportunity of trying what he felt towards us, and making our acquaintance with him. We inquired if he could tell us where Nelly — lived.

"Why, ye mean my Nelly, that's bad."

We said it was a little girl in our Sunday school, who had been absent some weeks, and we were anxious to know the cause.

"Ah, that's her ; why, I guess I can if ye'll follow me."

And he led the way down that terrible place where such sights and sounds met us, that no wonder he told us not to go ; for there was, indeed, a moral fever—misery and vice ran high. But there was a bold, defiant manner in our

guide that told us he was the lion of the court, and that so far we were safe. He led us to the very bottom, to a hovel of filth and wretchedness, and thrusting open the door, called out—

“Here, now then, these leddies are arter our Nelly.”

In answer to which a woman in rags, tatters, and dirt, presented herself at the door. We told her we should like to see our little scholar if she would allow us, as we heard she was ill; to which she objected, saying, “It was no good.” We begged of her to go and tell the child, and if she did not wish to we would not urge it. With a sullen, gloomy air, she turned up a ladder into a kind of loft, and presently we heard the dear little well-known voice faintly saying,—

“Yés, mother; eh yes, mother!”

The woman then called down to us, a summons we were not slow in obeying, when such a scene presented itself that filled our eyes with tears. In one corner, upon a heap of rags for a bed, lay the object of our search, whose dirty

and emaciated face told too plainly of want and neglect. We were not a little pleased to find the woman had left us to ourselves, when we ventured to take a survey of the loft : in another corner was an old mattress where they slept, which, with a broken chair, completed the furniture ; dirt and filth were not lacking, and we gathered our things round us with a sort of shudder. The only light and ventilation admitted was through some broken panes, the rest of the window being shut up with paper and rags. We very quietly asked her if she had enough to eat. She hesitated to tell us, when we assured her she need not fear, no one should scold her for it ; we would not let any one know.

“ Not often, ma'am,” she replied ; “ father and mother drink all the money away.”

We inquired if any one had been to see her, and found that the surgeon of the club to which her father belonged had been, but said she could not live, and it was no use wasting his time. It was a plain truth for the poor child, but not a tear came ; she seemed too much accustomed to

neglect and hard words to mind it, but her little face brightened as she said—

“I shall like to go to heaven.”

We asked her who she would see there ; when the sweet, simple answer was—

“I shall see Jesus, who loves me !”

We asked her again, where she heard of Jesus.

“I heard father curse Jesus one day, but I didn’t know who He was then ; but when I went to the Sunday-school, they told me Jesus loved little children.”

We read of Jesus inviting the little children to Him and blessing them, and then talked to her about the folding of the little lambs, and of the Good Shepherd carrying them so lovingly in His bosom, when, in an ecstasy of delight, she exclaimed—

“He’ll carry me ! Won’t He carry me ?”

We left the little treasure, after praying that God would protect and bless this dear lamb of His flock, telling her we should come again in a few hours. We descended to the place called

a kitchen, when we entreated of the unnatural mother to wash her child, and make her more comfortable, to all of which we received no answer, so took it for granted she had no intention of doing it. We were much gratified at finding the man waiting outside the door for us, and in the same manner he led us back to the street. We told him we should return soon with some things for his little girl that we thought she wanted.

“Well, ye’d better say the time, and I’ll be here for ye.”

We expressed our pleasure at the proposal, and fixed the hour, gathering from it the truth that his protection was needed. We were too oppressed and sick at heart to go any further, and returned home to collect some comforts for our little Nelly. At the hour appointed we set off again, when, true to his promise, we found the man there in readiness. The lengthened hours of the day had not improved the condition of the people, for they were in a state of drunken excitement and merriment. Oh, how we won-

dered at the forbearance and the longsuffering goodness of God, that He did not take speedy vengeance upon the guilty mass, where His name was profaned, His Sabbaths broken and disregarded, and where sin and every evil passion reigned without control. But, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord."

During our absence the mother had taken our advice, and made her child both clean and comfortable. We had agreed that while one stayed below to detain the parents, the other should take up the little tempting bits we had carried—we were afraid to leave them in their hands, lest the little sufferer for whom they were designed should go without. We stayed some few minutes and spoke to them of the bright hope and prospect of dear Nelly; that soon, very soon, she would be taken from them to that better home, where sin cannot enter, and where suffering and pain are unknown, and urged upon them to give up the drudgery of sin and the service of Satan, as a hard taskmaster, and accept the perfect

freedom which Jesus gives—freedom from sin, freedom from the punishment of sin. But it was like rain upon a rock, taking no effect, leaving no trace ; they appeared lost to all feeling, and to have no comprehension for such things.

We left some clothing with the mother, promising to be there in the course of the following day, for we saw our little Sunday scholar was very near glory. We had our escort again to the street, and before leaving us he said—

“ If I a’nt at the top next time, ye needn’t be afeard ; I shall be at the bottom, so ye can come down.”

We could not pay our visit until the evening of the day, when we found the dear little one so nice in her clean gown, and looking so sweet and placid, but too far gone to speak. She knew us, and gave her hand and smile as a welcome ; death was then breaking the fetters that detained her sweet spirit, and we spoke gently to her of soon being with Jesus, repeating the hymn

she was so fond of, and had often sung at school—

“ There is a happy land,
Far, far away,
Where saints and angels stand,
Bright, bright as day.”

A tear dimmed her large bright eye, but we felt it must be one of joy, not sorrow, for she looked happiness itself, as if already a little angel, only waiting for wings to take her flight. We kissed the dear marble face, and bade her farewell until we should meet again

“ Around the throne of God in heaven.”

We could find neither father nor mother when we got below, and inquired among the neighbours for them. No one knew where they were, but supposed “they were gone off together.” We left word we should come or send the next day, for we felt anxious to know the end of our little friend. We went early the following morning, and found she died in the night, but what hour none knew; for while they slept their

drunken sleep, the angel convoy descended, to that dark, miserable room to guide the little spirit home. How truly we rejoiced in her release ! Pure little spirit ! she was now with Jesus, whom her infant heart had loved, singing in a sweeter note—

“Bright, bright as day.”

We had entered the street a few weeks after, when we were met by the policeman, who was apparently on the watch for us : he had been a close observer of our doings, and seemed to know about the time we should make our appearance; when, touching his hat in his usual respectful manner, stopped us, by saying he hoped we should not go on, as the Irish were holding a “wake,” in celebration of one of their Saints’ days, and having returned from high mass had indulged in plenty of beer, and were then in a state of mad intoxication. We thanked him for the trouble he had taken, as the riotous *sounds* we heard of a band playing and the *mob* yelling convinced us his precaution was

right; they had recently returned from "harvesting," and altogether were making a high day of it. We smiled at their idea of sanctity, and pitied the delusion and ignorance in which they were kept, believing just so much as the priest tells them, and not daring to inquire beyond. Surely, none more deeply need the light of truth to shine upon them to lead them into the glorious liberty of the Gospel, breaking the priestly fetters that bind them, and showing to them that the Scriptures alone are able to make them "wise unto salvation." We thought of our dear aged friend in the midst of it all, and prayed God to protect her and her idiot boy.

There were some of the courts we were so satisfied contained no human habitation, that we were accustomed to pass them without attempting to enter; but one morning we were attracted by smoke issuing from an open door, a place where we had imagined coals were kept, or sweeps deposited their soot. Great was our surprise on reaching it, to find a dozen or more *men and women*, some sitting round a few hand-

fuls of fire enclosed by bricks, and others lying in every direction upon the ground in a state of deplorable destitution and drunkenness. It was only a momentary glance, for one of the women had enough womanly feeling left to bid us "run," as one of the men sprang to his feet, and with outstretched arms staggered to the door, shouting, "Och, my honey, come in."

We laid some tracts on a stone near to them, making a retreat as quickly as possible, and had gained the street before the man had passed the door of the hovel ; there we knew we were safe even if he pursued, for many from those ugly doors followed us with a friendly eye. We tried time after time, and not without occasional success, to prevail upon them to let us enter and read to them. We had not been able to pay another visit to our old man, for his virago, with her keen eye, was always on the watch. But a door or two further on some men were sitting in a tolerably sober state, and we ventured to ask if *we might* go in and read to them, and also to *rest ourselves* ; they gave us permission to do so

not unwillingly, for we fancied they appreciated our politeness to them, if nothing else, or, as they would term it, we "spoke civilly to them." We read from the 7th chapter of Mark, and, appealing to one who, from his blue jacket, we judged to be a sailor, said he knew how cheering and encouraging a friendly voice was when out upon a dangerous sea ; and that we all needed a friendly voice to help and cheer us over the stormy sea of life, that there was no voice like that of Jesus, bidding us trust in Him, and no power greater to keep us from daily temptation, and to direct us through life's difficulties, when one of them said :—

"I guess ye only know what ye read ; ye don't know much of its roughness and difficulty."

The reader assured him she knew a great deal of the rough way of life, and had felt how sweet the voice of Jesus was, and could, with confidence, offer the same happiness to them, giving them many of the gracious, loving invitations of the Gospel, telling them of God's hatred of sin, *and willingness to pardon all who sought Him ;*

that Jesus died for sinners, and there was mercy for the chief. They listened with respect and attention, and I do not remember we ever met them again, for they were only wayfaring men, staying for a night. But we hope the precious seed found root in some of their hearts ; it encouraged us to go on, and "sow beside all waters," looking with confidence to Him who alone can give the blessing and the increase, who can convert the "wilderness into a fruitful field," and has declared His word "shall not return unto Him void."

We were leaving one of the alleys, when a woman came running after us, begging we would go back to a young woman in a dying state. It was a house we had often been to, but always met with a look of displeasure, until at length we were forbidden to call ; and now the one who had so harshly repulsed us was dying. As we ascended the stairs we heard the piercing wail, "I am lost ; I am lost !" We sat down and tried to soothe her excitement and agony of grief, by *telling of Jesus as a Saviour, inviting and saving*

she "lost," and could save even to the "uttermost ; but her hopeless cry was, "Not me—not me !" We assured her, whatever the aggravation of her guilt might be, salvation was for her, if she would only believe it, and accept it. She threw herself round, and with a look of bitterness, as if the remembrance was a fire to her, and which sent a thrill of terror through us, exclaimed, "Yes ! *I called, but ye refused.*" We inquired if her husband was at home, as we heard footsteps on the stairs.

"Yes," she replied, but hesitating, continued, "he is not my husband," and burst into bitter tears.

At once we read the painful truth, and were grieved at heart, that one so young and pleasing should have fallen. The man entered, wearing a look of sorrow and distress, and spoke very kind and soothingly to her. But the bitter consciousness of sin was now most distressing and agonizing to her mind. She felt she must soon stand before a holy God, without a shelter or a hiding-place. She had refused the blood that cleanses, *and the righteousness that covers.* She had ~~li-~~

tened often to the offers and invitations of mercy, and been led to the "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," and knew how precious is a Saviour's love, for she was no stranger to her Bible, but had turned a deaf ear to its instructions ; and now it was "too late." We had often sat by the dying bed of the Christian, and felt the happiness of falling "asleep in Jesus," but had never witnessed the writhings and throes of a soul conscious of its death eternally, and without a ray of hope to illumine the dark future. Death was then upon her face, and with it a look of blank despair ; words were of no avail ; we could only pray that mercy might be extended, even in the last hour. It was a solemn scene to us. With spirits sad and depressed we left the house, and felt how striking, in contrast, were the sweet notes of a lark hanging from a neighbouring window. We could not help saying, "Sing on, little captive ! sing on ; you are not the prisoner of sin and guilt. Pour out again those heaven-taught notes, and lift our souls to that bright world where holiness and happiness reign ; where we, too, shall sing

some joyful notes of praise to 'Him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.' " Oh that we could persuade many to learn the notes of that song now ; to seek that "peace which passeth all understanding," which flows from a look of faith to a crucified Saviour, from whence life, pardon, and acceptance are drawn, causing them, with a joyous heart, to strike the first note to the praise of free and sovereign grace. We had for some weeks paid our aged friend only a hasty visit, and felt it would be welcome and refreshing to turn in and hear a little from her deeply-tried and deeply-taught spirit, for she was as the silver refined and the gold purified, and many were the lessons of sweet, earnest, practical piety, that fell from her lips, that helped to give us courage by the way, and stimulate us to go on serving the Lord. She had for some days been weak and feeble, through the intensity of pain, but was now reaping benefit from the remedies her new friend had prescribed ; her warm and grateful heart could never recount his goodness without a starting

tear. But she always traced her mercies to the Fountain-head, regarding them as heavenly blessings, coming through earthly channels, as rivulets streaming from the ocean, and that ocean the full heart of a covenant God. We unburdened our minds to her by telling of the painful scene we had just left, and how incapable we felt of meeting the case, when, with her usual sweet confidence in the love and power of Jesus, she replied—

“Commit the case to a full Saviour, whose salvation is for ‘*whosoever will*,’ giving only His words, for they are life and power to a soul ‘dead in trespasses and sins.’ And He ‘willeth not the death of a sinner,’ but entreats them from heaven with ‘*Why will ye die ?*’ ”

She lay with her hand resting upon the Book of Life, from which she drew daily and hourly of the “living water,” and from which she had been reading to her poor half-witted boy who sat beside her. He knew what work meant, and his way home, and was conscious of a mother’s love, *and that generally seemed the extent of his comprehension.* But now and then lucid moments

were given, when he would speak of God and heaven, and appeared sensible of higher and better things. The firm and constant resistance of temptation which he manifested encouraged her to hope he really understood more than he sometimes appeared to ; nevertheless it filled her, as a mother, with anxious and deep concern, her only refuge and solace being in the assurance of God's protecting love and care she sought so earnestly for him.

We had visited, or become acquainted, we thought, with every habitable place in the main street, and were not a little surprised to see a boy, jug in hand, ascend some steps leading from a kind of cellar, around which straw was always scattering ; and we had concluded it was a sort of store for it. There were no regular windows, only a temporary frame fixed in, with a few panes to admit light. We stopped him, and inquired if any one lived down there.

" Why, we do, ma'am," he replied.

We descended the steps, and saw a miserable, dirty, dejected woman, looking like one who had

given herself up hopelessly to the depth of her poverty, sitting by a few embers, barely sufficient to warm her. We inquired if we might go in, when, with a peculiar soft and gentle intonation of voice, which we could hardly reconcile with such an exterior, she said—

“I thought you didn’t mean to come here; I’ve watched you these many months.”

We expressed our sorrow in having unwillingly and unknowingly passed her by, and drew a broken chair and stool, to sit down and talk with her, for we saw she was heartbroken and desponding. We inquired why she was in such a condition—so wretched, and herself so dirty; when in heartbroken accents, and yet the same soft voice, she answered—

“Oh, ma’am, I don’t care what becomes of me; my boy you saw just now is my only comfort: my husband beats and neglects me, leaving me for days without food, and will stay away for a week together; and yet I am always glad when he is out,—I do get some quietness then.”

We asked her if she had tried to brighten her

house—but alas ! what was there to brighten ?—and give him a cheerful fire and welcome when he entered.

“ I have, ma’am, time after time, and then he thinks I have had money from some one, and abuses me to get it, when often I have not had a penny from anywhere ; he will perhaps stay at home for a day or so, and then go off again, bringing back companions worse than himself, if such a thing is possible. Oh, ma’am, you don’t know anything of it, and can’t understand the misery.”

We saw and felt it was a distressing case, and tried to lead her to the only true Source of comfort ; we talked to her of the sympathy and tenderness of Jesus, who knew her sorrows, and entreated her to seek rest and shelter in His loving heart. The subject was not new to her, for in early life she had been in a Sunday-school, but had failed to put the precious lessons she then learnt into practice through her life. It was evidently pleasing to her to hear of the “ glad tidings,” for with much feeling she remarked—

“It is so like the sound of my early home, to hear of such things, which I have sadly, most sadly forgotten. Oh, thank you, thank you, for coming !”

We encouraged her to cheer up, and make herself and house tidy ; but never did we feel more powerfully how easy the admonition, how difficult the practice, to a heart crushed by unkindness, and meeting no reward, no kind word of satisfaction or approval, from him who ought to have appreciated it.

We promised to see her again soon ; and if there was anything she wanted, we would try and procure it for her—for we saw she was really very ill ; but her modesty prevented her making any request, leaving it to us to supply what we liked, only it must be something her husband could not pawn or turn into money for drink. We were greatly interested in her, and felt there was a precious jewel in that unpleasing casket. We obtained for her a ticket for coals, some warm *clothing*, and a few shillings from a benevolent *fund*; and when we conveyed them to her a few

evenings after, were most truly pleased to see the improvement that kind words had wrought. Encouraged by the interest we had shown, and the little presents we carried, as expressing a thoughtful care for her, she promised to try and not give way to hopeless despair. Just upon this her boy rushed in, almost breathless, calling out, "Here mother, look!" and held up a fine rabbit his master had given him for their dinner the next day. But seeing in the twilight that some one was there, he shrunk back abashed; we invited him to show it to us, by way of setting him at his ease and gaining a little of his confidence, when his mother held up the order for coal, bidding him run for it at once, as he would not have time in the morning, and their stock was already exhausted. Thus they mutually shared their pleasures and comforts, for he was a good boy, and tried in every way to supply the place of his wretched father. We shared largely in their pleasures, and felt at how little cost we can confer much happiness. *We had taken with us some interesting narratives*

to induce her to read more, to engage her mind, and keep it from dwelling upon the outward wretchedness over which she appeared to have no control ; her Bible, too, we saw was brought down from the dusty shelf, for her and her boy had agreed to read together, and try to pass more profitably their many lonely hours. We met him as we left the house, wheeling in the coal, and bade him take as much care of his mother as he could. The tears rolled down his dirty face as he answered—

“I do, ma'am, for I shan't have her long.”

Poor boy ! we pondered his words, for they seemed prophetic : we had failed to notice in her pleased and brightened face that she was so much worse ; but true it was, she was soon to die. We could not dismiss from our minds his melancholy words, and hastened at an earlier hour on the following Sabbath to see them. She was in bed, and had been for two days ; her health had long been sinking under ill-treatment and hard fare. We never thought her ugly after our first visit, for hope and comfort animated her,

and now she was earnestly inquiring, "Am I safe for eternity?" and as a gleam of hope through Christ illumined her soul, it spread its gladness over her face; still, the great and momentous question was not settled, and she knew eternity was near. We read such passages as encouraged simple unquestioning faith. "Only believe" of the perfect atonement and satisfaction for sin in the death of Christ, so vividly set forth in the living bird being dipped in the blood of the bird slain, and then set free; of the blood sprinkled upon the lintel of the doors, and the destroying angel passing by; so must the blood of Christ be seen upon the heart as a sign of "no condemnation;" that there must be a saving application of it to us individually, and the taking hold of Christ by faith, for "as many as touched him were made whole;" and Jesus says, "*Look unto me, and be ye saved*;" when, with clasped hands, she eagerly inquired,—

"Will He save me, who have slighted the blessing so long? Precious Jesus! canst thou save me?"

Oh, how solemn, how eventful was this moment to her soul ! her eternal interest and safety seemed suspended upon it. We assured her again and again that salvation from first to last was all of grace ; that no merit of her own was needed ; the very plea of her unworthiness and sinfulness would reach the heart of Jesus, and meet with his compassion, and full and free forgiveness ; that faith asks no more than a “looking unto Jesus,”—the look of expectation, and touch of love, however feeble, brings great blessing to the soul.

“I see it now, I see it now !” she exclaimed, as if the mental scales had fallen, and faith could pierce into all the sublime mysteries. “Oh, speak to me, speak to me of Jesus, who gave Himself *for me* !”

Oh that it had been possible to sketch that beaming face, already lighted up with coming glory ! Words fail to describe the scene in that low cellar, her poor boy hanging upon every word that fell from her lips, never stirring from the place he had taken at the head of her poor

miserable bed. But not a thought from either was bestowed upon their poverty and loneliness—the one intent upon securing a heavenly portion; the other how he could best soothe the last moments of his dearest earthly friend. We inquired if she would like to have medical advice, as we could easily procure it for her. From her hesitation we saw there were some thoughts revolving in her mind, and it was the expense she feared it would be to us. We assured her it would be none whatever, for love constrained him as a Christian to labour for his Master, and to give back the talent in a holy loving service.

“Then I should,” was her reply, “for he is a physician indeed who cares for body and soul.”

Again we enlisted the willing services of our kind friend, who found the body was past his aid, but tried to strengthen her faith and hope, and fix them both upon Him to whom she was fast hastening; and his efforts were not in vain, for the Spirit applied his words with power to *her heart*; clearer light was given, and her

stronger faith took firm hold, and accepted full salvation through Christ. All her entreaty then was—

“Speak to me of Jesus ! Oh, speak to me of Jesus !”

We had not long to watch by and minister to this dear child of God, for ere the week closed she had commenced a new and heavenly life that knows no death. Only her poor boy was with her when she died : it must have been a terrible night to him, alone with the dying in that dreary cellar ; but his happy account of the sure and certain hope that filled and sustained her mind, and gave such peace to her last days, was pleasing in the extreme. And he, dear boy, had not watched so faithfully beside her without catching much of her hope and joy : tears, real heart-felt tears, often stopped his utterance as he tried to speak of his own loss, and her eternal gain, for gain it most truly was, to exchange her state of suffering for that of rest and joy ; and well *might* she sing, when surrounded with heavenly *happiness*,—

“ No breaking heart is here,
No keen and thrilling pain,
No wasted cheek, where the frequent tear
Hath rolled and left its stain.

“ No sin, no grief, no pain ;
Safe in my happy home !
My fears all fled, my doubts all slain,
My hour of triumph come !

“ I have found the joy of heaven,
I am one of the angel-band :
To my head a crown of gold is given,
And a harp is in my hand !

“ I have learned the song they sing,
Whom Jesus hath set free ;
And the glorious walls of heaven still ring
With my newborn melody !”

He was now to leave the hovel a mother's love had endeared to him, and of which he would carry a hallowed remembrance through life, and to reside for the future with his master—an arrangement he hailed with pleasure, as it rescued him from his degraded and degrading father, who returned the day after the poor creature died, and seemed to think it a very good *rid-dance*, going off again with his dissolute com-

panions no one knew where, leaving the parish to perform what ought to have been to him a sacred duty. Many were the lessons we gathered from our visit to this humble abode : that of contentment was not the least, for the want and privation we there witnessed compelled us often with a grateful heart to say—

“ Not more than others I deserve,
Yet God hath given me more.”

And we saw how joy in the heart—the joy of believing, can lift the thoughts above and beyond present suffering, fixing the eye of faith upon that “ *weight of glory*.” Oh, there is a reality in grace ! It is a tangible thing, a powerful indwelling principle, that gives to life its highest motive ; for only when grace is “ shed abroad ” in the heart is the great end of life fully realized. When going from hovel to hovel, witnessing the degradation to which our nature can be reduced, how precious and exalting did grace appear, *transforming* and new-creating the entire man. *Often have I wished to be the very stones in the*

street rather than one of those whose hearts are filled with enmity and bitter hatred, who by their looks, words, and actions seek death, openly avowing they heed not, care not for Him who created them in wisdom, and recreates them for His glory, but who has power to restrain the wrath of man, and make it even to praise Him, by employing it to work out some of His great designs, showing how He can save and rescue from these volcanoes of sin. But the little children born and brought up in these fearful dens of iniquity, who see more, know more of vice than virtue, of evil than good, demand our deepest sympathy and mightiest effort to rescue them : numbers are reared in worse than heathen darkness and ignorance. They scarcely know there is a God, unless it is by hearing His name profaned, which has often struck a childish mind that He must be some one great for men to swear by, and led them to inquire who He is, and with the inquiry a ray of heavenly light has darted into their minds, which some subsequent event *has made more clear.* The truth of this we had

in the case of our little Sunday scholar : " I heard father curse Jesus ;" and that curse fastened itself upon her infant mind, and in after days she heard that " Jesus loved little children." Such objects of interest throng our daily path, and make up the multitude of our towns and cities ; and in this our great city, eminent for its mighty efforts to do good, and untiring in its zeal and activity to win the lost, restore the wandering, teach the ignorant, and allure them to the ways of holiness and peace, there dwells a mass scattered in its lanes, courts, and alleys, that know not of the " glorious light of the gospel," and to whom the sound of salvation would be a new or strange thing. But the " Spirit of the Lord is not straitened," and in answer to earnest believing prayer will be given " without measure."

I had soon to relinquish the engagement that had been to me one of peculiar delight ; for in the providence of God, I removed to a town at some distance from it. My heart truly thanked Him *for permitting* me to work for Him there, to *speak of His* love, and to scatter the precious

seeds of truth, the full fruit of which the last great day shall declare. And there had been the unutterable pleasure of ministering to those dear ones whom He loved and had safely housed, the little lamb folded, and the child taken home.

“ On that blessed shore arriving,
Pain and sickness at an end ;
Done all anxious care and striving,
Resting with their dearest friend ! ”

The dear aged one was left in good keeping, for her new friend and physician promised still to minister to her relief physically and temporarily; and the district was now visited by a Bible collector, in whom she found a happy kindred spirit, and a warm sympathising friend. It was with many regrets and tears I bade her farewell, yet, well assured of meeting her again in “ *our Father's* ” house above, where there is no more separation from those we love and have held sweet communion with. Her spirit had long been meetening for the glory of heaven; for as a precious gem of grace she was being prepared to adorn the Saviour's crown, and could

with calm delight speak of going home !—just like a child who had long been absent, and was now returning, and caught a distant view of the many-mansioned house, exulting in its nearness and hallowed attractions, and in the certainty and perpetuity of its pleasures.

“ 'Tis there, 'tis there I am to dwell,
With Jesus in the realms of day ;
Then I shall bid my cares farewell,
And He will wipe my tears away.”

I was not unprepared to receive the tidings a few months after, that she was in full possession of all the glorious realities that had inspired her hope, and won her warmest love ; and who can imagine the blessedness,

“ When once the soul has burst its cell,
And finds itself in heaven ? ”

When visiting the town some years after, my lingering love for the locality constrained me to bend my steps thitherward, for it had been to *me a school* of many lessons, so deeply impressed *upon the memory* that I carried them with me

in those after years. But so great was the change time had effected, that had I not been satisfied with the undoubted proof of it being the very spot, I could almost have questioned its identity. Instead of the irregular pathway with its heaps of dirt, there was a well-paved street, which presented an entirely new aspect; the houses were all new and well built, with some large manufactories, whose din and clatter told of a thriving business within. Only two of the familiar places remained, the court where our little Nelly lived, with its houses rebuilt, and looking quite another thing. I followed in thought the little feet that had once paced it to and fro, now treading the courts of heaven, beholding "Jesus who loves me." Dear little sainted one! The low cellar from which Jesus took a "precious jewel" continued in its former state; the renovating hand of time had spared it. I stood unconsciously recalling the scenes of past years, indulging in happy reminiscences, until roused by the gaze of the passers-by, as if *they wondered* upon what my eyes were so in-

tent. I would fain have pointed them to the attractive spot, and bid them follow her as she followed Christ. The poor humble dwelling of our dear aged friend had given place to one of size and importance, its outbuildings covering the entire space of the court ; but she had inherited one “not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” and when longing to be conveyed thither, her expectant soul would exclaim, “Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?” I recalled her sweet words, her dying message sent to me, that when I entered heaven she should greet me with “Welcome, dear sister ! welcome home !” And what a home of love, of welcome, and of reunion will it be.

“ No more of sin or pain
Shall her gentle spirit know ;
No tears shall dim her eye again,—
In heaven they cannot flow.”

But the multitude that crowded that street
and its dens—where were they ? Some swept
into eternity, knowing the bitter doom of those

loving sin and rejecting mercy ; others scattered to infest and taint with their deadly poison every locality they reach. But souls are precious, however deeply they may be sunk in sin and wretchedness. What an incentive this to those who know and feel the love of God, to care for the very outcasts of society. "All souls are mine," saith the Lord. He claims them all, and cares for all, whether rich or poor, refined or debased. And shall not we care for them too, and strive to win them for Him ?—care for the hardened careless ones, and warn them of the "*wrath to come*"—care for the sorrowing weary ones, needing a helping hand to lift them up—care for the sick and tried ones who need us to minister to and comfort them ? Oh, how many claim our compassion, and should quicken our flagging effort, and inflame our cold zeal, urging us to live for others, not for ourselves. The love of Christ constrains His disciples to say, "Here, Lord, am I, what wilt thou have me to do ?" The sphere of labour, and means of usefulness are many and great, and the Lord accepts the

feeblest service, and owns and blesses the weakest instrument, but loves the large-hearted and noble effort, and mighty attempt to honour His name and serve His cause.

“ Not *many* lives, but only *one* have we—
One, only one ;
How sacred should that one life be—
That narrow span !
Day after day filled up with blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil.”

THE END.

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